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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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IMMORTALITY.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."—1 Cor. xv. 19.

This is not the declaration of a universal principle: it is biographical and personal. And yet, there is in it a principle of prime importance. It is true that Paul and his compeers had sacrificed everything that was dear to man for the sake of Christ. Paul had given up the place that he had held among his countrymen, and the things which surely awaited him. He had consented to be an exile. Loving Palestine and the memory of his fathers, as only a Jew could love, he found himself an outcast, and despised everywhere by his own people. And the catalogue that he gives of the sufferings which he felt keenly; which perhaps would not have been felt by a man less susceptible than he, but which were no less keen in his case—that catalogue shows how much he had given up for Christ. And if it should turn out that after all he had followed a mere fable, a myth; that Christ was but a man; that, dying, he had come to an end; that he stayed dead, and that there was no resurrection, no future, but only that past through which he had waded, and that present in which he was suffering, then, surely, it would be true that of all men he was most miserable.

This is the biographical view; but it may be said of all men, in this respect, that no persons can so ill afford to lose faith of immortality as those who have had all their affections burnished, deepened and rendered sensitive by the power of Christianity. When Christianity has had the education of generation after generation, and has shaped the style of its manhood, and ordained the institutions by which its affections have been enlarged and purified; when, in short, generations of men have been legitimately the

(Easter) Sunday Morning, April 13, 1873. Lesson: 1 Cor. xv. 1-28. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 286, 255, 1,263.

children of Christianity, to take away from them the faith of immortality would be a cruelty which could have no parallel in the amount of suffering which it would entail.

It is not necessarily true that men without a hope of Christianity would have no incitement to virtue—certainly not in the ordinary way in which it is put to us. Abstractly, it is said that virtue is its own reward—and it is. If there was enough of it to amount to anything, it would be a great, an exceeding great, reward; but where it is a spark, a germ; where it is struggling for its own existence; where it bears but a few ripe fruits, the reward is hardly worth the culture. If all that we get is what we have in this life, it is but little.

Many men are favorably organized and favorably situated; they have an unyearning content; things seem good enough for them; and they do not understand why it is that persons should desire immortality and glory—that is, at first. In general, I think there are few persons that live long in life who do not, sooner or later, come to a point in which they wake up to the consciousness of a need of this kind. It is not always true in the case of persons of refined moral and intellectual culture that they are conscious of needing a belief in immortality; but a belief in immortality is the unavoidable result and the indispensable requirement of all true manhood. When you look at growth, not in each particular case, but largely, as it develops itself in communities; when you consider it, not only in a single individual, but in whole communities, as they develop from childhood to manhood, or from barbarism through semi-civilization to civilization and refinement, the law of development is always away from animal life and its sustaining appetites and passions toward the moral and the intellectual. That is the direction in which unfolding takes place.

The naturalist watches the insect, and studies all the stages through which it goes, till it becomes a perfect insect. We look at a seed, and see how it develops stem and leaf and blossom all the way through, till we find out what the plant is in its final and perfect condition. And in studying men to know what is the perfect condition of manhood, looking at them from the beginning to the end, which way does manhood lie, in the direction of the bodily appetites and senses, or in the other direction?

Men come into life perfect animals. There is very little that culture does in that direction, giving them a little more or a little less use of themselves, as the case may be. That which we mean when we speak of developing manhood in a child, is something more than the development of symmetry of form and power of

physical organization. When we speak of the civilization and refinement of the race at large, development does not mean bodily power nor bodily skill: it means reason; moral sense; imagination; profounder affection; subtler, purer, sweeter domestic relations. Manhood grows away from bodily conditions, without ever leaving them. The body becomes a socket, and the soul is a lamp in it. And if you look narrowly at what we mean by growth in mankind, whether it be applied to the individual or to the race, you will find that we mean an unfolding which takes a man away from the material toward that which is subtler, more spiritual, existing outside of the ordinary senses, though acting from them, as something better than bone and muscle, nerve and tissue.

All development, then, is from the animal toward the spiritual and the invisible. This is the public sentiment of mankind even in the lower forms of society. What are considered heroic traits, the things which bring admiration to men, if narrowly examined will be found to be not the things which belong to men as brutes—though these things may be employed by them as instruments. Even in the cases of such men as Samson and Hercules, who were rude, brute men, it was not their strength that drew admiration to them: it was their heroism; it was their patriotism; it was that which they did *by* their strength for their kind, and not for themselves. And in lower societies it is courage, it is self-devotion, it is the want of fear, it is the higher form of animal life, that attracts admiration. But as we develop out of barbarous into civilized conditions, we admire men, not because they can lift so much, or throw such heavy weights, or endure such hardships of body. Admiration on these accounts has its place; but higher than these is the power of thought, the power of planning, the power of executing, the power of living at one point so as to comprehend in the effects produced all circuits of time in the future. Thought-power; emotion; moral sense; justice; equity in all its forms; higher manhood, and its branches, which stretch up into the atmosphere and reach nearest to the sun—these are something other than those qualities which develop earliest, and are lowest—nearest to the ground.

True manhood, then, has its ripeness in the higher faculties. Without disdaining the companionship of the body, the manhood of man grows away from it—in another direction. There is not simply the ripening of the physical that is in man; but there is, by means of the physical, the ripening of the intellectual, the emotional, the moral, the aesthetic life, as well as the whole spiritual nature.

When reason and the moral sense are developed, there will inevitably spring up within a man an element the value of which consists in perpetuating things—in their continuance. It is spontaneous and universal for one to seek to perpetuate, to extend, life. I do not mean by this that one wants to live a great while; but men are perpetually under the unconscious influence of this in their nature: the attempt to give form and permanence to that which is best in their manhood. We build, to be sure, primarily, to cover ourselves from the elements; but we very soon cease to build for that only: we not merely build for protection from cold and from wet, but we build for gratification. We build to gratify the sense of beauty, the sense of convenience, and the sense of love. And we go on beyond that: we build in order that we may send down to those who are to come after us a memorial of our embodied, incarnated thoughts. In other words, when men build, they seek, by incarnation, to render things permanent which have existed only as thoughts or transient emotions. There is a tendency to incarnate the fugitive elements in men, and give them permanence. And the element of continuing is one of the elements which belong to the higher manhood.

This throws light upon the material growths of society. Men strive to perpetuate thoughts and feelings which are evanescent unless they are born into matter. Men build things for duration. There is this unconscious following out of things to make them last; to give them long periods. And it opens up to men the sense of their augmented being. Largeness of being is indissolubly connected with extended time of being.

We admire the pyramids, not because they have been associated with so many histories, but because they have stood so many ages. We admire old trees, not because so many tribes have sat under them, nor because so many events have taken place beneath them, but simply because they have age with them. For there are mute, inexplicable feelings connected with the mere extension of time which belong to the higher development of manhood in us. Frangible things are of less value than things that are infrangible. Things that last are of more value, on the same plane, than their congeners are that do not last.

Who can equal the pictures which are painted on the panes of glass in our winter rooms? Where can you find a Lambineau, or any painter who can give mountain scenery such as we have for nothing, every morning, when we wake up, and such as the sun outside, or the stove inside, destroys before ten o'clock? These pictures are not valued as are those which are painted on canvas,

and which are not half so good; but the element of enduring is with the latter, while the element of evanescence is with the former. Though the pictures on the pane are finer than those on the canvas, they lack the element of time, on which value so largely depends. The soul craves, hungers for, this quality of continuance as an element for measuring the value of things. This element of time is somewhat felt in the earlier conditions of humanity; but it grows with the development of men, and attaches itself to every part of human life.

I never saw a diamond that was so beautiful as are the dew-drops which I see on my lawn in summer. What is the difference between a dew-drop and a diamond? One goes in a moment; it flashes and dies; but the other endures; and its value consists in its endurance. There are hundreds of things which are as beautiful as a diamond in their moment; but the endurance of the diamond is measured by ages, and not by moments, and so carries on the value.

I do not draw these reasonings very close as yet—I do not desire to put too much emphasis upon them; but I think you will see that there is a drift in them, and that they will bear, at last, an important relation to this question of immortality. The element of manhood carries with it a very powerful sense of the value of existence. The desire to live is a blind instinct. A happy experience brings to this instinct many auxiliaries—the expectation of pleasure; the wish to complete unfinished things; the clinging of affection to those that have excited love; and habits of enterprise.

Besides all these, is a development of the sense of value in simply being. We have said that in external matters the continuity of being is an element of value in the judgment which mankind at large have put upon things. We say that the same is true in respect to the inward existence—to manhood itself. The savage cares very little for life. He lives for to-day; and in every to-day he lives for the hour. Time is of the least importance to him. The barbarian differs from the savage in this: that he lives to-day for to-morrow, perhaps, but not for next year. The semi-civilized man lives for next year; but only for the year, or for years. The civilized man begins to live in the present for the future. And the *Christian* civilized man begins to live with a sense of the forever.

The extension of the sense of time goes with the development of manhood in men. The sweet, the tender, the loving, the thoughtful, the intellectual, live not simply with a sense of life as a pleasure-bringer: there grows up in them, with their development

toward manhood, an intrinsic sense of the value of being itself. The soul knows the cargo that it carries. It knows that that cargo is destined to immortality. As men are conscious of seeing more, of thinking more, and of feeling more; as thought becomes more precious; as emotion becomes deeper and more valuable; so men more and more feel that they cannot afford to have such things go to waste.

A man who takes in his hand a lump of mud and molds it to some pleasing form, cares but little when, dropping it, he sees it flatten on the ground. The man that grinds a crystal, and sees it broken, thinks of it for a moment, perhaps, with regret, but soon forgets it. No one, however, can see an organized thing, having its uses, and indicating exquisite skill and long experience, dashed to pieces without pain. But what is anything that is organized in life worth in comparison with the soul of a man? And if that soul be pure, and sweet, and deep, and noble, and active, and fruitful, who can, without a pang, look at it, and think that it must in an instant go to nothing, dissolving again as an icicle from a roof in the spring?

This feeling is not the fruit of mere reflection. It is instinctive. It is universal. Men do not cultivate it on purpose. They cannot help having it. No man of moral culture can regard human life as without immortality except with profound melancholy. No man that is susceptible to reflectiveness can bear to think of man's existence here without the bright background of another life.

This sense of the continuity of existence is grounded in men, and grows with their refinement and development and strength, and gives color to their life, and change to their opinions, it may be.

To men who have developed moral sense and intellectual culture, every element of value in life is made precious by some conscious or some unconscious element of time and continuance. It is the nature of our better faculties, in their better states, to place a man in such relations to everything that is most precious to him, that it gives him pleasure in the proportion in which it seems to be continuous and permanent, and gives him pain in the proportion in which it seems to be evanescent and perishing.

We are building a crystal character with much pain and self-denial; and is it to be built as bubbles are blown? What is finer in line than the bubble? What is more airy? Where are pictures more exquisite, where are colors more tender and rich and beautiful—and where is there anything that is born so near to its end as a bubble? Is the character which we are building with so much pain and suffering and patience, with so much burden of

conscience, and with so much aspiration; is the character which we are forming in the invisible realm of the soul—is that but a bubble? Is that only a thin film which reflects the transient experiences of a life of joy or sadness, and goes out? Then, what is life worth? If I had no function but that of a pismire; if I were a beetle that rolled in the dirt, and yet were clothed with a power of reflection, and knew what the depths of feeling were, what intense emotions were, and what struggling and yearning were; if, being a mere insect, I had all that works in the intellect of man, and all the aspiration that goes with spiritual elements; if I were but a leaf-cutter, a bug in the soil, or about the same thing on a little larger pattern, and were to be blotted out at death, what would be the use of my trying to grow? If by refining and whetting our faculties they become more susceptible to pleasure, they become equally susceptible to pain. And in this great, grinding, groaning world, pain is altogether out of proportion to pleasure, in an exquisite temperament. The finer men are the better they are, if they are forever; but the finer men are the worse they are, if they are only for a day; for they have a disproportion of sensibility to suffering over and above present remuneration and conscious enjoyment.

Men feel an intrinsic sense of personality and personal worth. They have self-esteem, which is the only central, spinal, manly faculty which gives them a sense of personal identity and personal value, and which is an auxiliary counsellor of conscience itself. This sense of *I* demands something more than a short round of physical life, to be followed by extinction. I am too valuable to perish so; and every step in life has been training me in the direction of greater value. As men grow broader, and stronger, and finer, and deeper, and sweeter, they become more and more conscious of the intrinsic value of their being, and demand for themselves a harbor in order that they may not be wrecked or foundered.

Nor do I think that there can be found, to any considerable extent, or developed, friendships which shall not, with all their strength and with all their depth, resist the conception of dissolution or of fading. For friendships are not casual likings. Friendships are not merely the interchange of good nature, and the ordinary friendly offices of good neighborhood. These things are friendly, but they do not comprise friendship. Two trees may grow contiguous, and throw their shade one over upon the other; but they never touch nor help each other; and their roots quarrel for the food that is in the ground. But two vines, growing over a porch, meet each other, and twine together, and twist fiber into fiber and stem into stem, and take shape from each other, and are

substantially one. And such are friendships. Now, one cannot have his life divided as two trees are. He cannot enter into partnership with others, and be conscious that that partnership shall be but for an hour or for a moment. The sanctity, the honor, the exaltation, the exhilaration of a true and manly friendship lies in the thought of its continuance. There can be no deep friendship which does not sigh for endlessness.

Still more is this true of love: not that rudimentary form which seeks lower fruitions, and which is often but little more than passion done up in friendship; but that higher love which manifests itself chiefly in the spiritual realm; that love which is not forever asking, but forever giving; that love which is not centripetal, but centrifugal; that love which, like a mother's, gives for the pleasure of giving; that love which reveres; that love which looks up; that love which seeks to exalt its object by doing what is pleasant and noble; that love which demands continuance, elevation, yea, grandeur, it may be, in the thing beloved. How little will such a love tolerate the idea of evanescence, the dread of discontinuing! Can such a love do other than yearn for immortality?

So then, if you take the thought, it is this: that if men develop, they come under the dominion of higher faculties; and that it is then their nature to stamp on all their occupations, on their self-consciousness, on the whole development of their affections, the need of continuance, of immortality. There are, therefore, in the growth of the mind itself, as a department of nature, these elements of conviction. The mind cannot do other than develop in itself a faith in immortality.

It may be said, and it sometimes is said, that the origin of the belief of existence out of the body—of spiritual existence—may be traced directly back to the dreams of the barbarous ages—to a period when men were so low that they did not recognize the difference between a dream and a waking reality—to a time when persons dreamed that their friends came back to them, and waked up and believed that they had been back. Thus, it is said, began the thought of continuity of life after death. For my part, I do not care how it began. The question is not how it started: the question is, What becomes of it now that it has begun? No matter how it was born, what purpose is it to serve? What is it adapted to do? How is it calculated to influence our manhood? In what way shall it be employed to lead man God-ward? How shall it be used to work most effectually in the direction of civilization and refinement? It so fits every human soul, that men will not let it go. They cling to it with their inward and best nature.

All the experiences of human life fall in with this tendency of the mind. When men look out upon the incoherent and unmannerly course of things in time, I can understand how, believing in the future, they may live with patience; but in every age of the world where the clear light of immortality has not shone, men have mostly been discouraged, have been generally indifferent to public superiority, and have taken no interest in things done for the sake of humanity. Such is the worthlessness of time, to the thought of those that have no faith in the future, that they have cared for little except present physical enjoyment. And on the whole, when such men crowd together, and tribes take the place of individuals, or kingdoms take the place of tribes, with all their complications in the working out of their clashing results, they look upon human life, and feel that the world is not worth living for. Things are so uncertain, products are in such disproportion to their causes, or to the expectations of men, that if there is to be nothing but this life, then, "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die," is not only the philosophy of the epicurean, but the temptation of the most wise and frugal and self-restraining. The nature of life to a man who is highly educated, requires that he should believe in the continuity and existence of the myriads that he sees in such a state of quarreling infelicity and wretchedness in this mortal condition. The utter futility of the best part of a man's life here, the total bankruptcy of his best endeavors, the worthlessness of his career from the material standpoint, makes it imperative on him to believe that he shall have another chance in another sphere of being.

Is it enough to have been born, to have lived till one is of age, and then to be launched out to founder in mid ocean? Is it enough that one should devote the best part of his life to the building of a character, only to see the fabric which he has constructed tumbling about his ears? Is this enough in the day of distress and bankruptcy? Is it enough, in the time when a man's ambitions are crossed, and the sky is dark, and he can do nothing but stand amid the ruins of his hopes and expectations? Is not the thought revolting to every instinct of manhood?

But if there is another life; if all our labor has this value in it, that while a man is building up his outward estate he is more powerfully building up his inward estate; if it is certain that the man himself will live, no matter what becomes of his property and his reputation, then, all his endeavors have endless scope, and his life becomes redeemable and radiant.

Nowhere else so much as in the realm of grief, I think, is the question of immortality interpreted. It is true that the first shock

of overwhelming grief sometimes drives faith out of the mind; that it sometimes staggers the reason; that it sometimes dispossesses the moral sense of its accustomed health, and leaves the mind in weakness. As in a fever, the natural eye can see nothing aright, and things seem to dance in the air, and take on grotesque forms, so persons who are bewildered with first sorrow oftentimes see things amiss. And there is no skepticism which is so deep and pulseless as that which often takes possession of people in the first great overmastering surprise and shock of grief. But after one has recovered a little, and the nerve has come to its wonted sensibility, the faith of immortality returns. There is that in every soul which knows what is the strength of life and noble deeds and aspirations; and therefore there is that in every soul which calls out for immortality.

I cannot believe, I will not believe, when I walk upon the clod, that it is my mother that I tread under foot. She that bore me, she that every year more than gave birth to me out of her own soul's aspiration—I will not believe that she is dust. Everything within me revolts at the idea.

Do two persons walk together in an inseparable union, mingling their brightest and noblest thoughts, striving for the highest ideal, like flowers that grow by the side of each other, breathing fragrance each on the other, and shining in beauty each for the other; are two persons thus twined together and bound together for life, until in some dark hour one is called and the other is left; and does the bleeding heart go down to the grave and say, "I return dust to dust?" Was that dust, then? That trustworthiness; that fidelity; that frankness of truth; that transparent honesty; that heroism of love; that disinterestedness; that fitness and exquisiteness of taste; that fervor of love; that aspiration; that power of conviction; that piety; that great hope in God—were all these elements in the soul of the companion that has disappeared but just so many phenomena of matter? And have they already collapsed and gone, like last year's flowers struck with frost, back again to the mold? In the grief of such an hour one *will not* let go the hope of resurrection.

Can a parent go back from the grave where he has laid his children, and say, "I shall never see them more?" Even as far back as the dim twilight in which David lived, he said, "Thou shalt not come to me, but I shall go to thee;" and is it possible for the parental heart to stand in our day by the side of the grave where children have been put out of sight, and say, "They neither shall come to me, nor shall I go to them; they are blossoms that have fallen; they never shall bring forth fruit"? It is unnatural. It is hideous

Everything that is in man, every instinct that is best in human nature repels it.

Is not the human soul, then, itself a witness of the truth of immortality?

Men say, "You cannot prove it. There is no argument that can establish it. No man has seen it, and it cannot be substantiated. It is not a ponderable thing." Men demand that we should prove things by straight lines; by the alembic; by scales; by analysis; but I say that there is much in nature which is so high that scales and rules and alembics cannot touch it. And is not man's soul a part of nature—the highest part?

I hold that even the materialist may believe in immortality. For, although there is a gross kind of materialism, there may be a materialism which is consistent with a belief in immortality. Because, on the supposition that mind is matter, it must be admitted that it is incomparably superior to any other matter that we are familiar with. Is there any matter outside of mind that produces thought and feeling such as we see evolved among men? If it be the theory that mind is matter, and if the matter of which the mind is composed be so far above all other kinds of matter in its fruit and product, is it not on so high a plane as presumably not to be subject to the lower and coarser forms of examination and test? I know no reason why cerebral matter may not be eternal. I do not belong to those who take the material view of the mind; but I do not know that immortality is inconsistent even with materialism; and how much more easily may it be reconciled to the view of those who believe in the ineffable character, the imponderable, spiritual condition, of the soul!

In addition to these arguments, when we come to the Word of God, we hear the voices of those who sang and chanted in the past. We hear the disciple crying out, "Christ is risen!" and we hear the apostle preaching this new truth to mankind. So that now the heavens have been broken open. The secrets of the other life have been revealed. And is there not a presumption, following the line of a man's best manhood, that immortality is true? Does one need to go into a rigorous logical examination of this subject? Should one stand jealously at the side of the sepulcher of Christ, and examine this matter, as a policeman examines the certificate of a suspected man, or as one takes money from the hand of a cheating usurer, and goes out to see if it is gold? Shall one stand at the door from which issue all the hopes that belong to the best part of man; shall one look upon that which is demanded by the very nature of his better manhood, and question it coldly, and tread it under foot?

What do we gain by obliterating this fair vision? Why should not Heaven continue to shine on? Why should we not look into it, and believe that it is, and that it waits for us? Have we not the foretokens of it? Is not the analogy of the faculties one that leads us to believe that there is some such thing? Does not the nature of every man that is high and noble revolt at flesh and matter? Are they not rising toward the ineffable? Are not all the intuitions and affections of men such that, the better they are, the more they have of things that are manly, the more indispensable it is that they should have endurance, etherealization, perpetuation?

The heart and flesh cry out for God. They cry out for immortality. Not only does the Spirit from the heavenly land say to every toiling, yearning, anxious soul, "Come up hither," but every soul that is striving upward has in it, if not a vocalized aspiration, yet a mute yearning—a voice of the soul—that cries out for heaven.

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!"

On such a day as this, then, in a community of moral feeling, how blessed is the truth which comes to us, that we are not as the beasts that die; that we are as the gods that live! That for which we were made is immortality; and our journey is rough, straight, sharp, burdensome, with many tears. Our journey is not to the grave. *I* am not growing into old age to be blind, and to be deaf, and to be rheumatic, and to shrink a miserable cripple into the corner, shaking and tottering and forgetting all that I ever knew. The best part of me is untouched. *I* sit enshrined within the *me*. The soul; the reason; the moral sense; the power to think; the power to will; the power to love; the power to admire purity, and to reach out after it—that is not touched by time, though its instrument and means of outer demonstration be corroded and failing. No physical weakness touches the soul. Only the body is touched by sickness. And shake that down! shake it down! Let it go! For, as the chrysalis bursts open, and the covering which confines the perfected insect is dropped, that he may come out into brightness of form and largeness of life; so this body is but a chrysalis; and when we break through it, we rise on wings by the attraction of God, and by the propulsion of our own inevitable desire and need, and are forever with the Lord.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

LIFT upon us, this morning, the light of thy countenance, brighter to our souls than the light of the sun traveling in the greatness of his strength —a light where our dark thoughts wander; a light where our footsteps of hope stumble; a light to those doubts and to those enshrouding fears which so often take possession of our souls and would lead them captive, yet wandering upon earth in their darkness. When we are nearest to that which is best within us, we have most faith of thee and of immortality. When we rebound to that which is lowest and which brings us to the soil and to the beast again, we are most beclouded and most in doubt.

Evermore, then, draw us near to our better selves, that out of these gracious affections we may discern clearly the truths of our salvation, that we may know more of thee, and be more sure that thou art, and that thou art near to every one who needs and seeks thee. Bring to us the assurance of that other life the glory of which transcends all thought or knowledge. For how are we perpetually at odds with this life! How we, when walking most firmly, perpetually stumble; and when most vigilant, lose our way; and when strongest, are overcome with sudden and unexpected weakness! We are children of darkness; and all marks of our rudeness and imperfection cling to us; and yet we are filled with half-sights. We have expectations and yearnings. We are strangely drawn away from our lower selves. We hear sounds inarticulate which we cannot put together, but which seem to syllable joy to us afar off. In some hours we do understand voices which speak to us. It is the Spirit and the Bride that say from off the heavenly battlements to our souls that are wandering, Come home! We do understand the yearnings when we seek again that which we have once loved with all our souls' immortality. Can it be gone forever from us? Do we not seek our children in such a way that we must find them? Do we not seek our companions, and all to whom we have given that which is best in our souls? And shall we not find them? Can it be that they have gone out, or that they have been extinguished, because they are no longer visible to these mortal senses, and because we cannot with these earthly bodies touch them? Are they gone from that which is purest, and highest, and serenest in us? Hast thou not given us a nature that speaks of heaven as well as a nature which touches the earth? Do we not discern by the higher life of our souls not only the things which to the senses are invisible, but the things which the intellect cannot reason about? O Lord our God, give strength to that which is God-like in us to-day, that we may mount up through all the realm of doubt, and through all the drudgery of the senses, and stand in the midst of the substantial blessings of those who are freed from the body, and have risen unto spiritual life, and spiritual promise, and are forever with the Lord. Blessed company! How large! swelling through the ages, more and more blessed in immortal experience. Into that great ocean flood we send rills from our hearts. There are our children. There are our parents. There are our brothers and sisters. There are those, called by earthly names, that have been dearest and nearest to us. And though, going, they left us in tears and in darkness, now how do they rain down joys upon us, and help us! With invisible hands of sweet affection, how are we lifted by them! How through memory are we brought very near to the throne by those whose going seemed our greatest loss and disaster! How are they fulfilling in us, through our yearnings and upward reaching, all the promises which thou didst make, in the sanctification of our sorrow, and our enfranchisement through it! Verily, by wounding us thou hast made us better. By pruning we have been made to bring forth

more fruit. That part which bore fruit of the flesh, thou art chastising. That part which would not bear fruit to hope, and faith, and love, thou art causing to be full of blossom and full of cluster.

We thank thee for all that invisible way and all that mystery of conduct by which our life has been blessed, and by which we have been exalted from our low and sordid conditions, into the realms of hope and expectation, which shall be unchanged, except that they shall be over-mastered and excelled by realization. We bless thee for all that we hope and expect of the heavenly land. We thank thee in behalf of those who have toiled through all the ages, and who have been comforted by the sweet dew which has fallen on them from above. How many have been outcast that could not have lived but for the hope of heaven! How many have walked through darkness, and persecution, and suffering, even unto blood, strengthened by the hope of heaven! How many are now in fastnesses, how many are bowed down, how many are mourning, bereaved, whose strength is in the expectancy of heaven! How many are there to-day who need thee, O Lord Jesus, risen, a token and pledge that they shall rise! If we, too, may break through all the encumbrances of life and cerements of death; if we, too, may rise because thou hast risen, and with irresistible power may call up to thee with the consciousness that we are thine, then what is there in life that we need to fear? What burden can be too heavy for the hand of God that is under us? What experience can be too quick for souls that are comforted by the Holy Ghost? What consolations can be withheld from those that are but a step from heaven? What sorrows can be unrelieved which are known to Christ, and which are felt by him in our behalf?

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant to every one in thy presence such a nearness, to-day, of the heavenly influence, such a sense of the power of Christ's resurrection, such vehemence of hope, such gladness of faith, such love in our immortal part—in our soul-life—that all that is within us shall bless thy name. We take hold of thee, unknown, invisible, all-beloved Saviour. We do not understand what God is. We cannot throw the circuit of our thought around about the majesty of the universe. We cannot fill up the vast reach of infinite being. But out from the great unknown and invisible realm there comes to us the warmth, and the light, and the cheer of love. And we come back to see what it means in thy life and in thy words. We lift up those words and that life again, and enshrine them in our thought, in the heavenly realm. And thou dost interpret God to us. Thou art to us as the spring, with all its sweet sounds and budding promises to those who are weary of the winter. Thou art to us what the summer is to those that long for the summer.

O thou blessed, ever-rejoicing Christ! draw near to each one, this morning, in thy presence. Draw near to us, thy dear children. Cause the cup of our joy to overflow. Draw near to those who are afar from thee—who have forgotten their first love. Bring them back again with renewed consecration. Draw near to those who are pained and oppressed with burdens and sorrows. Let them know that there is emancipation, that there is yet glorious light and liberty, for them. Draw near to those who have had doubts and distressing fears, that their prison doors may be opened, and that they may be brought out by the Emancipator. Draw near to those who have been in the midst of sin, and under transgression, that they may know that there is a Heart that feels for them even in the seat of justice. O Lord Jesus, withhold not thy mercies from any this day. Be with those who are gathered in thine house, or who are confined at their own dwellings, or who wander at large without thought of God or thought of the sanctuary. Be with all thy children everywhere. Shine upon them, to-day, with thy Spirit. As the sun not only comes forth to those who are good

and just, but pours abroad everywhere his fullness of light and warmth, so shine thou with infinite fullness of mercy and of love upon the good and the bad; upon the just and the unjust; upon the righteous and the unrighteous; upon all who need thy saving power.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt accept our thanks for all the mercies which we have had as a church and people; for all the mercies of our households; for all the mercies of our personal lives.

We pray that thou wilt extend the same blessings which are ours to those who are without them. Spread abroad the new salvation of Jesus Christ to every part of this land, and of all lands. Gather in all nations. And at last may the whole earth see thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word which we have spoken. Lead us away from all doubt, from all fear, from all wandering anxieties, and from all the deadness of unbelief. Bring us, we pray thee, into the spring-tide of hope. May we stand in the midst of all our experiences, whether they be joys or griefs, to look away beyond the flood, beyond the setting of the sun, into the land of blessedness. How many await us there! By how many cords are we drawn!—but chiefly by the hope of seeing thee, O thou blessed Saviour, who for us hath tasted death! Drawn toward thee by all that in us is best, we wait for thine appearing. Grant, we pray thee, that thy blessings may fill us in all the hours of this day. And bless all thy people of every name. May grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to them all. We ask it through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. *Amen.*

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